

In the World . . .

“And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world . . .” (John 17:11).

Use this news story from recent days to help your students see the relevance of this week’s Sunday school lesson from the Standard Lesson Commentary®/Standard Lesson Quarterly.

FUELING THE FAITHLESS

Riots in Afghanistan last Saturday left several people dead and dozens injured. The cause of the violence was Islamic anger over the burning of a Koran (also spelled Quran) by a Florida preacher on March 20. Both the rioters and the Koran-burning preacher add fuel to the fires of strident atheists who claim that religion is dangerous “brainwashing” and should be suppressed. Among the atheists leading the criticism are Richard Dawkins and Sam Harris. The problem with religion (they claim) is that it is not simply wrong, but evil. Because of their supposedly “enlightened” view, Dawkins proudly calls himself and others like him *the Brights*; these are “people whose worldview is free of supernatural and mystical elements.”

FOOLING THE FAITHFUL

Intolerance toward religion is nothing new. Marxist Communism in the twentieth century had a long history of repressing Christianity. But today there is an increasing stridency in the claims of atheists. Jesus’ half-brother Jude foresaw the coming of times such as these (Jude 18). While Jude was concerned with scoffers in the world, he also warned us about false teachers who work their way into the church and do their damage from within the community of faith.

1. Was the burning of the Koran an insensitive act that was bound to incite terrorism or was it justified by the picture of Acts 19:17-20? Explain.
2. What should be the Christian responses to (a) the Koran burning, (b) the riots in Afghanistan that followed the burning, and (c) the resulting criticisms by strident atheists?
3. How do we express the compassion or mercy of Jude 22 to those outside the church?
4. How do we express the compassion or mercy of Jude 22 to false teachers inside the church, if at all?
5. In light of Jude’s teaching, what is your response to the world’s negative attitudes about religion? To those who follow false religion?

—Charles R. Boatman

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